



2 The Way

Text: John 4

Introduction: Last week we looked at how our mission for the church is based on the Lord's vision. We discovered that to fulfil Christ's vision, our mission is to love God, love others and love the lost. In today's text, we see how Jesus lived that out in his interaction with the Samaritan woman that he encountered at the well. Read John 4, and then reflect on the 3 ways in which Jesus demonstrated God's vision with this woman:

1. **Loving God** (John 14:34). Jesus loved God by obeying him in all that he did. He showed his obedience by travelling through Samaria and stopping to show his love.
2. **Loving one's neighbour** – The relationship between Samaritan and Jew was exceptionally strained. It would have been inappropriate for Jesus to talk to the woman, but it would also have been something no other Jewish man would ever have bothered to do, because they looked down on Samaritans. But Jesus loved her, and chose to put aside all of the cultural, religious and social issues and engage with her in a very real way. He reached out to her exactly where she was at.
3. **Loving the lost** – Jesus loved a lost person in such a way that she left different. From being anchorless in life, she was given a firm foundation through just one conversation. He gave her his time, energy and full attention, and he connected to her in a way that would capture her heart. He led her out of her brokenness by confronting her with what she needed: to believe that he was the Christ. He didn't get engulfed in the drama of her story, but he didn't ignore the details either. He acknowledged where she was at and called her to believe. In doing so, he not only rescued her out from a life of anchorless unbelief, but also paved the way for many other Samaritans to believe as well.

We do not default into loving God, others and the lost. In order for us to follow Jesus' example, we need to drill deep into God, and put things into place to help us be single-minded in our obedience to him.

Three ways for us to practically love God, others and the lost:

1. Prayer

Loving people requires our dependence on God. It is difficult to consistently love others in the way Jesus loves them and to put their needs and interests above our own. Prayer is our way of continually handing over our own will and desires over to God. Prayer allows us to connect to God, to hand over our struggle for control, and to release it over to his care. Prayer softens our hearts and reminds us that he is the one in control, and that it is he that deserves our obedience.

2. Pastoring

Loving ourselves, others and the lost requires shepherding. Our hearts are fickle and tend to default to trouble, if unattended, which is why the Bible calls us "sheep". Without a good shepherd to steer us, we are likely to "walk off a cliff".



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- Shepherding ourselves: To keep our hearts firmly following God requires us to intentionally discipline *our own hearts* and to steer our will and emotions in God's direction. Our affections will default to the way of the world and the flesh if we don't. The way in which we do this is to spend time in God's word, allowing it to speak to us, and to shape our thinking towards his. It requires taking stock of what we allow ourselves to think, and to redirect our thinking towards the truths found in his word. We have the responsibility as believers to choose truth-based thinking. Once we take stock of our thinking, we can then need to take stock of our choices. We need to discipline ourselves to make Godly choices. Obedience to God is the way that we show God that we love him (John 14:15).
- Shepherding others: We still struggle to keep our thoughts and lives in line with God's ways when we try and do it all on our own. God has called us into a family of believers in order to walk this journey with them. Having others speak into our lives can help us when we are being rebellious and refuse to see our sin, or when we are oblivious to the blind spots we have. It also helps when we are battling in our faith and when we need to be encouraged. At BBC, we have elders and pastors to steer the flock, to teach us God's word and to encourage us to faithfully follow God. But we also have Gospel Communities which are there to allow the flock to shepherd one another on a daily level.

3. Simplicity

Jesus embodied simplicity for us. He was single-minded about accomplishing the Father's business. He had compassion for people, but never got stuck in a crowd because of peer pressure or the need to be admired. He kept his focus and his mission simple. If we are single-minded in our devotion and obedience to Christ, it keeps our lives and choices on track, and allows us to keep things simple. Because obedience to the Father is not usually our priority, we tend to have multiple foci in our lives, which keeps our lives spinning. Here are some ways in which we do this, instead of remaining single-minded in obedience to God:

- We want to be accepted, so we over-please people and do not say "no" enough
- We want to be successful so we overwork
- We want to be comfortable so we are lazy, which has ramifications
- We want to be admired, so we do extra things at a cost to ensure other people keep affirming us
- We want to be entertained, and so we over-spend, or overcommit when we need rest and to save





Discussion Questions:

Prayer:

1. Why it is impossible to love others consistently without having an active prayer life?
2. In your own experience, how does prayer affect how you see yourself, God and others?
3. ♥ Personal Reflection: Think of one person in your life that you are being called to love, but find it impossible in your own strength. How do you think prayer will help you to obey God in loving this person, and what kind of prayers are you going to need to pray in order to be single-minded in your choice to love them consistently?

Pastoring:

4. Why do we need to pastor our own hearts daily, and what does this look like for you personally at the moment?
5. Why is it essential to read and study God's word, in order to pastor our own hearts effectively?
6. Why is it ineffective to only pastor our own hearts, and not be part of the process of pastoring others' hearts?
7. Why would it be hypocritical to think we should help shepherd and pastor others, if we are not in the discipline of pastoring our own hearts?
8. In our current group, do you think we are pastoring one another well? Explain your answer.

Simplicity:

9. Why is single-minded devotion to Jesus essential in our lives?
10. ♥ Personal Reflection: What are the top 3 things competing with your devotion to Christ and his mission to love him, others, yourself and the lost?
11. ♥ Personal Reflection: Of those 3 competing things, which of them do you feel God is asking you to sort out, so that it no longer competes with your obedience, and what is that going to look like?

Q: What is the one big take away that you need to take with you into 2018 as we keep our vision for our lives and the church before us?

